

The perks of adult education

By Wendy Kilpatrick, ESOL teacher, reprinted from Progress Spring 2006, published by VA Adult Learning Resource Center

"Don't you get perks? Benefits?" I am asked all the time when I say that I teach adults for Fairfax County Adult Education.

Of course I do, I answer. My perks are the phone calls from students after they have their citizenship interview, telling me that they wouldn't have passed it if they hadn't taken my class. My benefits are meeting a young former student at the local Cinnabon, and he tells me proudly that he is the manager. Or when I see my two Thai students, a married couple, working at a clothing store and they tell me that their job interview went the way we rehearsed in class. One of my students taking the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) was relieved and thrilled to tell me that on the real test, she had been given the same writing prompt that we had practiced in class!

At our credit union, my husband and I saw Salvador, surrounded by his children and grandchildren who are helping him apply for a loan for his first house. We later learn he got the loan. One student came to class and announced that she was the employee-of-the-month at her fast-food job. I met another student working at MotoFoto two weeks after I suggested she apply as a lab tech there. My students are now maitre d's at two of the tonier Holiday Inn restaurants. Another supervises the local Balducci's deli.

My students are my neighbors who participate in our civic association and parents' night at our elementary school, and whom I meet at our congressman's local office, where they are ready with their questions.

Those aren't benefits, I am told. "I think so," I say. When my mother and I shop at the grocery store, my students make sure that my mother is attended to and pass only the freshest bakery items her way. At Krispy Kreme, the manager, a former student, greets me and then gives me a baker's dozen.

Hermes came into class and announced that he had passed the citizenship interview. It was less than a month until the presidential election, so I gave him the phone number of my voter rep, and he returned to class an hour later registered and able to cast a provisional vote.

My favorite perk, I tell my critics, is attending the citizenship swearing-in ceremony at my school. Even though seating is limited in the small auditorium, I am ushered to the front row. Afterwards, students insist that I stand in the middle of photos with them and their families, all wearing elegant hand-made outfits from cultures that I probably will never experience. My favorite benefit is the satisfaction over the last 20 years that I had a part, no matter how small, in some people's success stories.

Think you're so smart? Take this pre-school test!

Pre-school children were asked: In which direction is the bus shown at right traveling? The only possible answers are "left" or "right."



The correct answer

All the children answered "left." Their reason: because you can't see the door.

FDA food safety publication enhances ESL class work



Veteran CCSN GED/ESL instructor John Ohrenschall followed up on a recommendation by frequent workshop presenter Maxine Frauman-Prickel* and discovered a helpful supplement to his ESL classes. “The FDA (Food and Drug Administration) publication *Keep Your Food Safe* (FDA04-1109C) was extremely useful to my students in recent pre-literacy ESL and beginning ESL classes,” he said.

John used *Keep Your Food Safe* to complement the texts *Stand Out 1* (Jenkins and Sabbagh, Thomson-Heinle, 2002) and *Downtown 1: English for Work and Life* (McBride, Thomson-Heinle, 2006). He included the FDA booklet as instructional material in installments over three class periods to enhance coverage on food safety.

“Students in both courses were interested and motivated in reading and discussing the content of the FDA Safe Food publication. I recall that on several occasions the students would ask questions, make comments, and provide advice from their own experiences in dealing with food to protect its quality,” said John.

John believes intermediate and advanced level ESL students could benefit from this publication as well. He can be reached at johnohrenschall550@hotmail.com, 702/557-8262.

- * Maxine is returning to Las Vegas on February 23rd to present “Teaching Strategies for Multilevel ESL Classrooms,” at the CALL program. See page 4 for details. For background on multilevel classes, check out “Teaching Multilevel Adult ESL Classes,” a Brief by Cathy Shank and Lynda Terrill at www.cal.org/caela; click on “ESL Resources,” then on “Briefs.” Also see articles on differentiated instruction and individualized group instruction in the March 2005 issue of *Focus on Basics* (www.ncsall.net; click on “Publications,” then on “Focus on Basics”).

Reading resources from Verizon

The Verizon Literacy Network offers several free resources to teachers of adults. For example, “Fluency Development: Practice Means Progress” (McShane, National Center for Family Literacy) describes six techniques for guiding adult learners. “Indicators of a Person with Low Reading Skills” (ProLiteracy Worldwide) lists common signs of reading difficulty — helpful in alerting friends or family members to the issue.

Go to <http://literacynetwork.verizon.org/>, click on “teach” along the left, then on “adult literacy” (bottom of page).

New GED math videos available online

The GED Testing Service recently added two training videos to the Web — one on the use of the calculator, the other on how to answer an alternate-format question

To view the eight-minute video clips, go to www.acenet.edu. Select “GED Testing Service” from the drop-down menu (under “Program or Service” along the left). This brings you to the GED Welcome page; scroll down to “GED Sample Questions” and click to access the page containing links to the videos.



Models for transitioning to higher ed

The staff at the New England Literacy Resource Center at World Education, Inc. surveyed adult education centers with transition components from around the United States, then categorized the results into five models.

The NCSALL (National Center for the Study of Adult Literacy and Learning) Occasional Paper *Transitioning Adults to College: Adult Basic Education Program Models* (by Zafft, Kallenbach, and Spohn) describes these models — Advising, GED-Plus, ESOL, Career Pathways, and College Preparatory. The paper chronicles the experiences of Connecticut, Kentucky, Maine, and Oregon in their efforts to institutionalize transitions for adults. It also contains themes and recommendations that others contemplating adult transition services might find helpful.

To download the paper, go to <http://www.ncsall.net/?id=26>

Standards, assessment, and curriculum: line 'em up!

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In 1998, Congress enacted the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), Title II of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), requiring states to report progress through the NRS (National Reporting System). The NRS relies on accurate measurement and reporting of student learning through assessment. Nevada uses CASAS to assess students in AEFLA-funded programs.

During the last few years, the U.S. Dept. of Ed has strongly urged states to develop Content Standards. Nevada's Content Standards for ABE and ESL/EL Civics are complete; Citizenship and ASE Standards are under development.

Nevada's Content Standard are posted at
www.literacynet.org/nevada/standards/index.htm



As standards and assessment guide curriculum and provide the framework for our adult education system, it is important they be aligned.

Alignment refers to how well all elements in a system work together to guide instruction and student learning (Webb, 1997). It directly affects the degree to which valid and meaningful inferences about student learning can be made from assessment data (Long and Benson, 1998). The alignment of standards and assessment is a dynamic and cyclical process, requiring constant attention throughout development, evaluation, and re-evaluation. Alignment can improve teaching and learning relative to standards (Long and Benson, 1998).

There are six general assumptions when addressing system alignment:⁽¹⁾

1. An aligned system of standards and assessments will meet its goal of improving student performance only if curriculum is also part of the aligned system.
2. In this aligned system, classroom instructional practices must be based on and clearly reflect the content standards and curriculum.
3. Alignment of state assessments to state standards will depend on the alignment of educational practices and philosophies between state and local education agencies.
4. State standards and state assessments should be visible.
5. Alignment should be viewed as an on-going process in need of periodic evaluation and adjustment.
6. Valid and meaningful data-based decision-making depends on the degree of alignment between standards and assessment.

How does assessment fit in?

As educators we know that assessment informs our practice. When we can identify what our students need to learn based on their assessment results, we can then look at specific standards that will address their needs and adjust our curriculum accordingly. Several studies have shown that when educators use aligned standards and assessments to guide their teaching, they modify their instructional practices. This has led to improved test scores.

As we move into 2007, we look forward to pursuing full standards implementation, a critical piece of our adult education alignment system that will help us continue to provide outstanding quality education for our adult learners.

Standards implementation: where are we?

We've begun to implement Nevada's standards through two pilot studies that offer volunteer teachers the opportunity to work with the standards.

In 2007-2008, all AEFLA-funded programs will be working on standards implementation. Numerous workshops will be offered throughout the state to assist teachers with implementation. Teachers will be directly involved in the process of improving the rigor of classroom teaching by strengthening the curriculum through standards alignment as they determine how the standards will best be used for their learners.

⁽¹⁾ Executive Summary from report of the State Collaborative on Assessment and State Standards, Comprehensive Assessment Systems for IASA Title I (SCASS CAS).

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This professional development project is a leadership activity funded by a grant from the Nevada State Department of Education, Workforce Investment Act, Title II (Adult Education and Family Literacy). There is no discrimination or denial of participation on the basis of gender, race, national origin, color, disability, age, or sexual orientation.

Upcoming workshops

Attendance at the following workshops and completion of the follow-up activity qualify for .5 Inservice Renewal Credit for Nevada's Teaching License and/or .5 credit toward renewal of Nevada's ABE Certificate of Performance. The workshops are free, but space is limited, so pre-registration is required.

| Title, date, place, and contact | Workshop presenter and description |
|--|--|
| <p>Active Learning: Fun and Games in the Classroom 2/10/07; Las Vegas Fay Savedra Gamboa, CCSN 702/651-4722; fay_savedra@ccsn.edu</p> | <p>David Bate. This workshop will provide new and experienced teachers of adult ESL, ABS, and GED students new ways to involve students in learning. Participants will explore active learning strategies that engage the brain, foster interaction, and increase retention of information. Significant time will be devoted to student-centered learning games — what, when, where, and how to use them in the classroom. Other topics include small group work, graphic organizers, attention-getters, and the use of humor and movement.</p> |
| <p>Strategies for Teaching Adult Students with Learning Disabilities 2/10/07; Reno Brad Deeds, TMCC 775/829-9052; BDeeds@tmcc.edu</p> | <p>Lyn Pizor. Whether you are new to adult education or very experienced in the field, whether you teach Adult Basic Skills, ESL, or GED students — you've likely wondered how you could best help LD students learn. Participants will learn about current brain research and the ability to "rewire" and make new connections to build up all the "brain pieces" that were missed the first time in school. Topics include the use of technology; how to build a solid foundation for reading; phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension; and strategies that work for students with memory, attention, processing, and sequencing problems.</p> |
| <p>Teaching Strategies for Multilevel ESL Classrooms 2/23/07; Las Vegas Jay Yeo, CALL 702/507-3430; yeoj@lvccld.org</p> | <p>Maxine Frauman-Prickel. Geared to new and experienced teachers of ESL students at all levels, this workshop addresses why multilevel classes exist and how to maximize student learning within them. Participants will learn how to plan for instruction and experience strategies that address the range of abilities within the multilevel classroom, be it large or small. Participants will be provided activities to help them meet the workshop's objectives.</p> |
| <p>Teaching Strategies Essential for Managing Learner Success 3/2/07; Winnemucca Meachell LaSalle, Great Basin College 775-753-2109; meachelll@gwmail.gbcnv.edu</p> | <p>Don Prickel. This highly interactive workshop, designed for all teachers and tutors of adults, draws on current research and best practices for adult learning. Participants will be introduced to a simple five-step process for delivering content to adult learners. Embedded in each of these five steps are new and emerging learner-centered strategies that can enhance (if not transform!) classroom and teaching techniques. Participants will learn how to apply strategies — including cooperative learning, questioning, dialogue, and assessment — geared to help students think more critically and master content more efficiently and effectively.</p> |